

TENNESSEE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
FISCAL REVIEW COMMITTEE



FISCAL NOTE

SB 1497 – HB 2078

February 7, 2018

SUMMARY OF BILL: Allows an out of court statement made by a child under 12 years of age to be entered into evidence, if that statement describes a sexual act performed with or by the defendant on that child or describes an act of physical violence against the child. Establishes certain determinations that a judge must make before admitting the testimony.

ESTIMATED FISCAL IMPACT:

NOT SIGNIFICANT

Assumptions:

- Hearsay is a “statement, other than one made by the declarant while testifying at the trial or hearing, offered in evidence to prove the truth of the matter asserted.” Tenn. R. Evid. 801(c).
- Hearsay is not admissible except as provided by the rules of evidence or otherwise by law. Tenn. R. Evid. 802.
- Tennessee Rule of Evidence 803 provides 21 exceptions to the general rule that hearsay is not admissible.
- Rule 803 (25) establishes an exception for statements made by a child under the age of 12 relative to being sexually or physically abused to be admitted into evidence in a civil trial that relates to custody, shared parenting, or visitation.
- The proposed legislation would provide a statutory exception to the hearsay rule by allowing a statement made out of court by a child under the age of 12 relative to being sexually or physically abused to be admitted into evidence in a criminal trial.
- The proposed legislation requires a judge to admit the statements of the child during a criminal trial, (1) if those statements relate to any sexual act performed by, with, or on the child or if that statement describes any physical violence against the child, and (2) if the judge makes certain determinations established in the legislation (e.g., the statement provides guarantees of trustworthiness, the child’s testimony is not reasonably obtainable by the proponent, and there is independent evidence of the sexual act or physical violence).
- The proposed legislation may result in evidence being admitted in a criminal trial that would otherwise be inadmissible; however, such statements are more likely to be admitted under the exceptions provided under the Tennessee Rules of Evidence;

SB 1497 – HB 2078

therefore, the passage of this legislation is not likely to result in an increased probability of conviction at trial. Therefore, the proposed legislation is not anticipated to impact state or local incarceration costs.

- The proposed legislation changes current rules of evidence, and it does not create any new cases for the courts, public defenders, or district attorneys. Any impact to the operations of the courts, public defenders, and district attorneys can be accommodated within their existing resources.

CERTIFICATION:

The information contained herein is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Krista M. Lee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Krista M. Lee, Executive Director

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